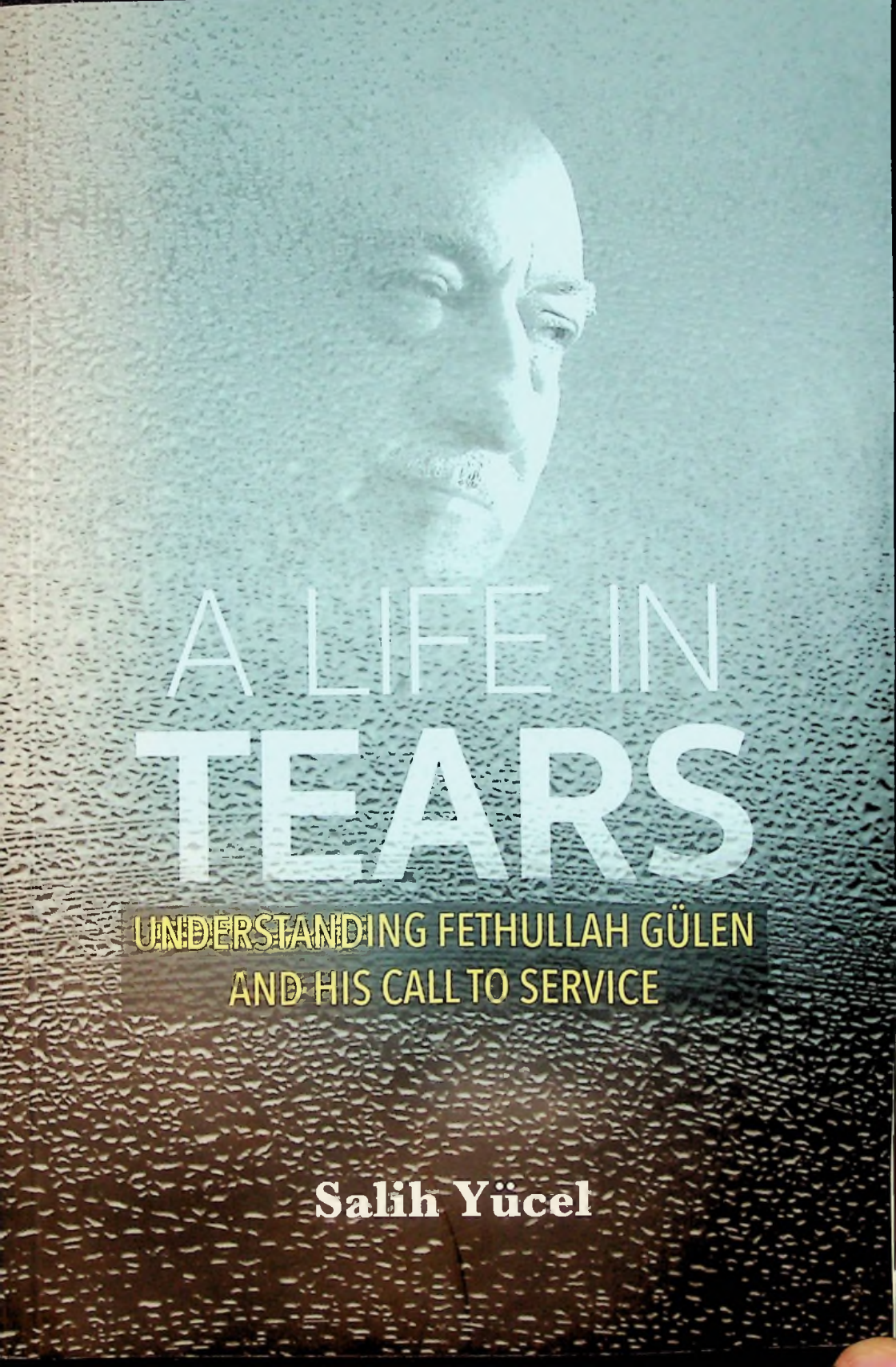
A LIFE IN
TEARS
UNDERSTANDING FETHULLAH GÜLEN
AND HIS CALL TO SERVICE
Salih Yücel

"This very interesting book provides a concise yet detailed account of the principles that govern the altruistic life and thought of Fethullah Gülen. It offers a stunning rebuttal to the false accusations and suppositions regarding Mr. Gülen promoted by the current, desperate regime in Turkey and its deluded allies. The book also articulates a rich and elegant understanding of Islam, as envisioned through the perspective of Mr. Gülen, who is both a profound intellectual and mystic and also an eloquent poet."
Ori Z. Soltes, PhD, Georgetown University, United States

"This book presents a unique opportunity to see Islam through a distinct lens by depicting the struggles and plight of one individual: Fethullah Gülen. The personal oral accounts and archival research present an analytical insight but also a poetic outlook on Gülen's life and thought."
Mahsheed Ansari, PhD, Charles Sturt University, Australia

"This semi-biographical book clearly elucidates this inspiring scholar-cum-sufist in a post-modern era as an activist who, without rest and full of tears, continues to serve Islam and humanity."
M. Amin Abdullah, PhD, Former Rector of State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Fethullah Gülen is indeed a leading figure in the current Turkish socio-political context. While for many he is the inspirational Islamic scholar who promoted education and global dialogue, the authoritarian Turkish state sees him and the Hizmet Movement he inspired as a threat to their status quo. Regardless of the impression different circles have about him, it is universally acknowledged that he has had a life in tears dreaming of a "golden generation," but also a life spent in persecution and ongoing trials. Like many independent thinkers, he is an accomplished author and scholar who have had to pay a high toll for his efforts to remain free from political influence. This book goes beyond the current controversy around his name, and tries to explore Gülen as a scholar around his certain personal traits and some of the key concepts he has been emphasizing over the years to mobilize his audience.

Based on a research that covers over seventy books, 564 sermons, over 500 talks by Gülen, more than fifty interviews of his close associates and friends aired on TV networks, and the author's personal observations, this book is a useful reference for those who study scholarly traditions of Islam in general and Fethullah Gülen in particular.

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Salih Yücel

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of our surroundings and to protect the ecological balance. To achieve an optimal environment, it is necessary to mobilise the masses to protect not only the physical aspects but also understand their deeply spiritual side. If we do this, Gülen is highly optimistic about the environment, as its beauty is planted and evident in human nature. When this inner dimension of human beauty is explored, nurtured and reflected outwards, a wonderful and pleasant environment will become a reality both in this world and in the Hereafter. Gülen, like Yunus Emre (1240–1320), indicates that everything must be loved because of the Creator.

In summary, the idea of protecting nature and conserving it has to be appropriated by all individuals. Perhaps by doing so, humankind can reach the "Lost Paradise" once again.[116]

116 Doğu Ergil, "What is his perspective on the environment and natural living". Retrieved 13.11.2016.

Chapter 3

The Tears of Fethullah Gülen

The Tears of Fethullah Gülen

Crying is part of human nature. As soon as the baby enters this world, his or her first action is to cry. The tears of a baby can be for future happiness or calamities. Suffering, weeping, crying and moaning for humanity is one of the major characteristics of all Prophets, saints, and great scholars. The Prophets, saints, and great scholars cry throughout their whole life at various levels for the wrongdoings, sins, crimes, injustices, oppression, and tyranny in the world. Their tears are like a cure for suffering, relieving depression and providing a peaceful way of resisting oppression and injustice. Sometimes shedding tears is a way of manifesting their helplessness. In that case, not just their eyes but also their hearts and souls cry. They do not only cry but they also make others shed tears. They view bursting into tears as one of the most acceptable *duas* (supplications) in the sight of God. Then, the question arises, "Why do they weep, cry, and sigh?" To find out the answer, I focused on the Qur'anic verses related to the topic and the exegetical works of more than twenty great scholars, including Fethullah Gülen's interpretations. Then, I looked at *seerah* (biographies of the Prophet) and the biographies of the Companions, saints and scholars to understand the topic in depth.

Before analysing the reasons for Gülen's tears, it is necessary first to look at three Qur'anic verses which are directly related to this topic from the perspectives of various classical and modern major exegetical works. Secondly, I will briefly touch on the shedding of tears by the *Salaf al-Saliheen*. Thirdly, I will elaborate on how Gülen reads the tears of Prophets, Companions of the Prophet, and great scholars. Finally, I will investigate the crying, weeping and sighing of Gülen in the light of his works, sermons, public and private talks, close friends' testimonials, and my personal observations of him.

3.1 Tears in the Qur'an

The Qur'an honours the shedding of tears for many reasons with the exception of falseness or showing off. There are different reasons for shedding tears: out of a very deep knowledge about the Creator; out of love of the Beloved and fear of God; as a reflection of mercy, excitement, suffering and regret, physical pain and loss of loved ones. The

last two topics are outside the scope of this study.

There are hundreds of examples of individuals or people who cry in the Holy Scriptures of monotheistic religions, especially in the Qur'an. We do not know if Prophet Adam, the father of humanity cried or not when he opened eyes to life. However, the sacred texts indicate that he cried when he was expelled from Paradise and sent to this world. Even though they are not authenticated, some sources report that Adam cried for forty or sixty years,[117] and then his repentance was accepted by God. It can be said that he cried for decades because he did not cry when he was created. He is not just the father of humanity but also the father of sorrow. Prophet Adam began his worldly life with sorrow: the fall from Paradise, Paradise lost, separation from God, and, Hereafter, the heavy responsibility of Prophethood. He sighed with sorrow throughout his life.[118]

For Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), it was necessary for Adam to cry in order to reach perfection.[119] The tears of Adam caused the mercy of God to descend from the heaven to earth and become the water of life for his soul. His tears were the seeds of happiness, a spiritual elevator of ascension, and a model of repentance for the sins of his offspring. Without tears, he would not have been able to relieve his separation from Paradise. He cried not just because of the *zalla* (error) which he and his wife committed, but also for the sins of his future offspring until the Day of Reckoning. He was the first ring in the chain of those who sigh. Thus, after him, Prophet Noah followed in Adam's footstep. Based on scholarly works, he cried longer than Adam.

Al-Alusi (1802–1854) asserts that Prophet Noah experienced great sorrow over his tribe's rejection of the faith and he wept heavily for his people. His constant crying led to his being called Noah, which means "the one who cries a lot." Noah's original name was Abd al-Ghaffar.[120]

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117 Ibn Kathir, *History of the Prophets*, trans. Muhammad Mustapha Geme'ah (Riyad: Darus Salam, n.d), 13.

118 Fethullah Gülen, "Huzn" (Sadness or Sorrow), *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*, www.fgulen.com/en. Retrieved 9.12.2016.

119 Ibn Arabi, Tafsir al-Qur'an, altafsir.com.

120 Cited in Elmalılı Muhammad Hamdi Yazır, *Kur'ani Kerim Tefsiri*, www.kuranikerim.com/telmalili/nuh.htm. Retrieved 5.10.2012.

Prophet Abraham did not just shed tears so often but also moaned without respite: "Indeed, Abraham was forbearing, grieving and [frequently] returning [to Allah]" (Qur'an 11: 75). The word *awwâh* (most tender-hearted) is used as an attribute of Abraham (Qur'an, 9:114, 11:75). According to al-Qurtubi (1214–1273), *awwâh* has fifteen different meanings. It means "very merciful, confident; completely sure, invoker of the Name of God a lot, making a deep sound of expressing pain, remembering the Names of God in solitary conditions with tears, deep sorrow, a deep reverence for God, showing clemency, weeping, sighing for his sins, and feeling sympathy for people who are suffering." *Awwâh* also means to feel very deep sorrow and pity towards all creation, including enemies and sinners.[121] This reflects in a state of extreme suffering, shedding tears, crying, and finally it transforms into a deep moaning. According to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149–1209), *awwâh* is the spiritual station of Abraham. God honours Abraham with this honourable title.[122] He indicates that, when Abraham learned about the destruction of the tribe of Lot, he cried and sighed a lot for them. When angels mentioned that it was an order from God, Abraham still continued to pray for their salvation.[123] For Gülen, even though *awwâh* is the title of Abraham, whoever has this attribute, can be called *awwâh* as well.

Prophet David's (Dawud) tears left permanent marks on his face.[124] Prophet Jacob burst into tears after hearing that a wolf ate his son, Joseph. Eventually, he lost his sight after crying for many years.[125] Joseph cried when he was thrown into the well. After being rescued from the well and living in a luxurious mansion with enough food to enjoy, Joseph shed tears and his heart ached daily with longing for his parents and brother Benjamin.[126] He continued shedding tears in the jail for years and during his administrative position as controller of the granaries in the palace of the Egyptian king as well.[127] In a helpless state during his

121 Al-Qurtubi, Al-Jamiu Li Ahkami'l Qur'an, altafsir.com. Retrieved 17.04.2017.

122 Fakhruddin ar-Razi, Mafatih'ul Ghayb, altafsir.com. Retrieved 07.09.2016

123 Ar-Razi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 07.09.2016.

124 Fethullah Gülen, *Sonsuz Nur* 1 (Izmir: Nil Yayinlari, 2011), 479.

125 Ibn Kathir, *History of the Prophets*, 144–148.

126 Ibid., 75.

127 Ibid., 75.

sickness, Prophet Job (Ayyoub) turned to Allah, not to complain but to seek his mercy: "Verily! distress has seized me, and You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy" (Qur'an, 21:83–84).

Ibn Mubarak (726–797) stated that Wahb ibn Al-Ward narrated that Prophet Zachariah did not see his son John (Yahya) for three days. He found him weeping inside a grave which he had dug and in which he resided: "My son, I have been searching for you, and you are dwelling in this grave and weeping!" "O father, did you not tell me that between Paradise and hell is only a span, and it will not be crossed except by the tears of weepers?" He said to him: "Weep then, my son." Then both wept together. It is stated that Prophet Yahya cried so much that tears marked his cheeks.[128] Al-Ghazali adds that, when Prophet Yahya cried in prayer, the trees and plants used to weep with him. His father also used to cry so much at seeing his son's weeping that he sometimes fell into a swoon.[129]

On his return from Mount Sinai, Prophet Moses saw his people singing and dancing around the statue of the calf. Furious at their pagan rituals, he flung down the Tablet of the Law and he cried for them.[130] The Christian scriptures report that Prophet Jesus wept over knowing what would befall the inhabitants of the city because of their rejection of him (Luke 19:41). According to Isaiah (53:3), he would shed tears regularly during the years of his ministry.

There are about thirty-five verses in which tears are mentioned in the Qur'an. It is essential to explain three verses (19:58, 5:83, 12:16) which are directly related to the topic in the light of major Qur'anic exegeses:

> Those are some of the Prophets upon whom God bestowed His blessings (of Scripture, Prophethood, good judgement, and wisdom) from among the descendants of Adam and of those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and from among the descendants of Abraham and Israel (Jacob), and those whom We guided and chose. When the All-Merciful's Revelations were recited to them, they would fall down, prostrating and weeping. (Qur'an, 19:58)

128 Ibid., 171.

129 Al-Ghazzali, *Revival of Religious Learnings, Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-id-Din*, translated by Fazl-ul-Karim, V. IV p.139 ghazali.org/ihya/english/ihya-vol4-C3.htm. Retrieved 03.10.2016.

130 Ibn Kathir, *History of the Prophets*.

Ar-Razi states that this verse is about all the Prophets. Weeping during the act of prostration is the characteristic of all Prophets and those who believed in them.[131] Al-Qushayri (986–1074) adds that they do not prostrate physically only but also their inner (souls) prostrate with them.[132] Al-Baqillai (950–1013) asserts that during the prostration, the Prophets have *marifa* (gnostic knowledge) and are at the spiritual station of *muhabba* (love). They love to be with the Beloved. For them, nothing is sweeter or more enjoyable than prostrating and shedding tears.[133]Al-Qurtubi (1214–1273) says that when the believers read or recite the Qur'an, they weep and prostrate.[134] Additionally, al-Baqillai says that during the prostration, they are at the spiritual station of *ma'rifatullah* and *muhabbatullah*. Commenting on this verse, Ibn Arabi asserts that it is the crying of the heart. During the prostration, they feel and witness the Attributes of God, and there is a strong desire to be reunited with Him[135] Sayyid Qutb states that they are truly God-fearing and very sensitive to pleasing or displeasing God. This sensation is so strong that they cannot express their inner feelings in words. Their eyes are tearful and they fall, prostrating themselves before God, and weep.[136] Al-Sa'rawi (1911–1988) argues that the Qur'an does not address only the mind but also all parts of the body. This leads to the eyes filling with tears, the softening of the heart, and prostration.[137]

> When they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes brimming over with tears because they know something of its truth (from their own Books); and they say, "Our Lord! We do believe (in Muhammad and the Qur'an); so inscribe us among the witnesses (of the truth in the company of his community)." (Qur'an, 5:83)

131 Ar-Razi, *Mafatih'ul Ghayb*, altafsir.com.

132 Al-Qushayri, *Lataif al-Isharat*, altafsir.com.

133 Al-Baqliyyu, *A'raisu'l Bayan*, altafsir.com.

134 Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jamiu'l Ahkam*, altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

135 Ibn Arabi, *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

136 Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Vol. 11, p. 285, available at www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_11_surahs_16-20.pdf. Retrieved 03.10.2016.

137 Muhammad Matawalli Al-Sa'rawi, *Khawatir Muhammad Metwali Al-Sa'rawi*, altafsir.com. Retrieved 03.10.2016.

According to al-Tabari, this verse was revealed for a group of Christian clergy who were sent to Medina by Negus, the King of Abyssinia to obtain more information about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). When they listened to the Qur'an and witnessed his attributes and character, they wept and prostrated.[138] Al-Zamakhshari (1070–1143) asserts that the priests already knew the truth about the Prophet, but they prostrated to God after seeing Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Medina.[139]Ar-Razi states that when Jaffar ibn Abu Talib recited the chapter of Mary, King Negus and the priests who were present shed tears and then prostrated.[140] He adds that crying for fear of God is an attribute of all Prophets.[141] Al-Qurtubi states that weeping and making others cry is an attribute of scholars. They cry, but they do not faint, they supplicate and cry but not for getting human attention, they grieve but do not ask God to be allowed to die.[142]

Al-Baqillai interprets this verse as follows: It explains the attributes of sincere faithful people. They listen attentively to the invocation of the Names of God; their minds are totally satisfied with the evidence, and their hearts are sweetened. Their attributes are manifested in tears which are the product of *ma'rifatullah* and strong desire to be with God.[143] Ibrahim Haqqi adds that the Christian clergy accepted the truth after hearing it and hastening to be enlightened. Recitation of the Qur'an softened their hearts and filled their eyes with tears.[144] Also, Al-Baqillai says that this verse explains the sincere attributes and truthfulness at the degree of certainty of faith. They shed tears as their souls observe the Prophet. Their hearts are sweetened with *dhikr* (remembrance of God), they benefit from the ocean of knowledge and feel signs of *tawhid* (unity of God) in their consciousness. Their tears are aspiration. It is due to possessing in-depth knowledge (*ma'rifatullah*)of God. These attributes are reflected

138 Al-Tabari, al-Jamiu'l Bayan, altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

139 Al-Zamakhshari, al-Kashaf, altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

140 Ar-Razi, ibid., altafsir.com.

141 ibid.

142 Al-Qurtubi, ibid.,

143 Al-Baqillai, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

144 Ismail Haqqi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

in their lives by shedding tears.[145] For al-Jilani (1077–1166), shedding tears means to reach a high spiritual station.[146] On commenting on this verse, Qutb states that they were so deeply touched when the Christian clergy listened to the Qur'an that tears sprang from their eyes in recognition of the truth they heard. In the first instance, they cannot express this appreciation in any way better than allowing their eyes to overflow with tears. No words are adequate to describe their feelings. Such a response, indicative of the profound effect, is a well-known human reaction.[147]

The Qur'an mentions the false tears (12:16) of Joseph's brothers. Those who shed false tears or cry for show are called the losers by al-Ghazali. To cry like an actor with false tears for show is very dangerous and kills one's spiritual life. As al-Ghazali says, the one who cries may lose, and the one who does not cry may lose as well. The tears are also a reflection of loyalty to someone's goals.[148] Tears are mentioned almost as many times as *zakat*, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. This shows how the Qur'an gives importance to crying and weeping for a variety of reasons. Additionally, tearful eyes can be due to the wonder of creation, and suffering for others is praised. It can be said that as *zakat* purifies the wealth, similarly tears for love or fear of God purify the heart and soul.

3.2 Tears in the *Sunnah*

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would cry for the wonder of the creation during worship. He used to pray the *Tahajjud* and then would look at and contemplate the heavens and cry. Therefore, the Prophet sought refuge from eyes that do not shed tears as he took refuge from Satan.[149] Abdullah ibn Shikkheer said, "I attended the noble assembly of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He was performing the ritual Prayer (*Salat*). Because of his crying, such a sound emitted from his chest, like

145 Al-Baqillai, ibid., altafsir.com.

146 Al-Jilani, ibid., altafsir.com.

147 Sayyid Qutb, ibid, Vol. 4, p. 186, www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_4_surah_5.pdf. Retrieved 03.10.2016.

148 Fethullah Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri*, 2, (Izmir: Nil Yayınları, 2011), 179.

149 Ibn Hajar, *Fathu'l-Bari*, 11/139. In Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* 4, 115–118

that of a boiling pot."[150] The Prophet would cry a lot and made his Companions cry as well. He would recite the Qur'an while shedding tears and strongly recommended reciting it with sorrow and weeping. According to Ibn Arabi, the Prophet views all humans as his children and relatives, and he even he saw them as being like the organs of his body.[151] So, he cries when any calamity or tragedy strikes them.

Gülen says that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)) can be called a Prophet of grief and lamentation. One night he recited: "If You should punish them, indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them, indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise" (Qur'an, 5:18). And then he cried the whole night. When the Archangel Gabriel let him know that "God will not afflict you about your *ummah* on the day of judgement," he ceased crying.[152] Aisha said that "one night the Prophet asked my permission and he wanted to worship his Lord. He made his ablution and started praying the *Tahajjud*. He recited 'Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding' (Qur'an, 3:190) and cried until the Morning Prayer." Gülen views fasting, the *Tahajjud*, enthusiasm and tears as being the foundation of one's spiritual life and strengthening of the faith. The status of performing the Prayer with tears does not just affect the person but also softens the hearts of others.[153] The Prophet says, "Humble yourself and cry. Inevitably, the heavens, earth, the sun and the moon and stars cry because of fear of God."[154]

The Qur'an narrates the stories of people who cry as exemplary. Al-Zamakhshari relates a story: Saleh al-Marwi saw the Prophet in his dream. He recited the Qur'an to the Prophet without shedding tears. The Prophet told him, "O Saleh, this is the Qur'an but where are the tears?"[155] For al-Jilani, those who shed tears (during the recitation) do so because of their desire to reach a higher spiritual

150 Shama'il Muhammadiyah, *sunnah*.com/urn/1803040. Retrieved 01.10.2016.

151 Ibn Arabi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

152 Al-Qurtubi, ibid., altafsir.com. Gülen, *Beyan*, 111.

153 Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* 4, 118.

154 Ismail Haqqi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 17.04.2016,

155 Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashaf*, altafsir.com.

rank.[156] Abdullah ibn Abbas (619–687) recommends supplicating, "O God make me cry during the recitation of the Qur'an" after each recitation. Most of the exegetes accept that this verse included all previous Prophets and their followers.

The Companions of the Prophet and righteous peoples also cry. Ali (r.a.) narrates that they spend the whole night in prayer and recite the verses of God. Their eyes shed tears, so much so that they wet their clothes.[157] Ar-Razi argues that it is a tradition of righteous people to express themselves during grief or sorrow like Mary, the mother of Jesus. On realising that she was pregnant with Jesus, she said, "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten" (Qur'an, 19:23). When Abu Bakr was the caliph, he saw a bird on a tree which was eating its fruit; he said, "Glad tidings to you, O bird. I wish I were the fruit which you eat." Umar took some chaff from the ground and said, "I wish I were chaff." On the day of the Battle of Jamal, Ali (r.a.) said, "I wish I had died before this day." All shed tears and wanted to be unknown or have no responsibility.[158] Abu Bakr was not allowed to pray in public in Mecca because when he recited the Qur'an and shed tears, those who listened would convert to Islam. Then, a thought occurred to Abu Bakr to build a small mosque in front of his house, and there he used to pray and recite the Qur'an. The women and children of the pagans began to gather around him in high numbers. They used to wonder at him and watch him. Abu Bakr was a man who used to weep very much, and he could not stop weeping during the recitation of the Qur'an.

Irbad Ibn Sariya was one of the poor Companions, and he is known for bursting into tears. Once, he wept because he did not have anything to donate and therefore he could not participate in the Tabuk expedition. A verse was revealed for his status and the Qur'an honours such tears (Qur'an 9:92).[159] Umar ibn Abdu'l-Aziz many times would cry or weep

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156 Al-Jilani, ibid, altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

157 Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religious Learnings, Ihya Ulum-id-Din*, trans. Fazl-ul-Karim, Vol. IV, 141, ghazali.org/ihya/english/ihya-vol4-C3.htm. Retrieved 03.10.2016.

158 Ar-Razi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 1.10.2016.

159 Abu Naim al-Isfahani, *Hilyetul Awliya (Allah Dostlari)*, 2 cev. Sait Aykut (Istanbul: Sule Yayınları, 2003), 79.

and sometimes even scream and faint after visiting the cemetery.[160] In the night, he would perform the *Tahajjud*, supplicate and cry until the *Fajr*, the Morning Prayer.[161] If a heart does not cry through the eyes, it has spiritual diseases, some Sufis argue. The Prophet and his Companions viewed shedding tears as part of the spiritual ascension in this world and the extinguisher of hellfire in the Hereafter.

3.3 Why humans cry

In this section, firstly, I will elaborate on the causes and spiritual value of shedding tears. Then, I will analyse how sorrow, grief, *ma'rifa* and love of God manifest as tears in the light of the works of great figures in the Islamic history because their works are products of a combination of the sacred suffering of their souls, the shedding of tears, the supplication of being helpless in status and gifted knowledge (*ilm mawhibah*). Finally, what has made Gülen cry from a young age will be studied by analysing his sermons, works, public and private talks, and the testimonials of his friends.

There could be physical, emotional, spiritual, religious, and other reasons for shedding tears. It is a fact that all Prophets, saints, and great scholars cried. According to Gülen, sadness and shedding tears are the status of the saints, groaning day and night are the shortest way to reach the Reality.[162] Also, the shedding of tears is the quickest and shortest way of acceptance of *dua* (supplication) in the sight of God because there is nothing that can purely manifest the enthusiasm of heart more than tears.[163] For al-Ghazali, shedding tears is considered by the great scholars and saints as an essential for purifying the hearts from spiritual diseases such as jealousy, hatred, rancour, animosity, and the like. He states that as a cloth polluted by foul acts can be cleaned with soap and warm water, so a soul polluted with passion and greed can be purified by the tears of the eyes and the fire of repentance.[164] Ismail Haqqi says *huzn* (sorrow)

160 al-Isfahani, ibid., 2, 235.

161 al-Isfahani, ibid., 2, 253.

162 Fethullah Gülen, "Bence Tam Ağlama Mevsimi", *Yağmur*, October, 2002.

163 Gülen, *Beyan*, 114.

164 Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religious Learnings*, Vol. 4, p. 20, available at ghazali.org/ihya/english/ihya-vol4-C1.htm.

is the beauty of saints. The Prophets and *siddiqs* get pleasure from *huzn*. They are spiritually delighted with sorrow.[165] Abdulqadr al-Jilani, the founder of the Qadiri Sufi order says that if Allah loves a person, He will inspire sorrow in his heart. Through *huzn* the hearts will be purified.[166] Ibn Arabi states that such believers who have sorrow in their hearts are at the spiritual station of witnessing the signs and manifestation of the attributes of God in the universe. It is the weeping of the heart.[167]

It can be said that the lover of God cools down his/her heart by shedding tears, but the faithful one burns his inner self by bursting into tears inside himself. Tears are the mercy of the Most Merciful which bursts from the eyes. It is like a dew which combines the tongue, heart, and feelings of someone. For Gülen, the earrings of *huris* in heaven have almost no value compared with tears. Nothing is sweeter or more joyful than the tears of suffering for others.[168] Rumi asserts, "God takes a few drops of your tears, and gives you the Divine fount sweeter than sugar."[169] If it is not sweeter, how could Prophets, saints, and great scholars endure crying day and night? They cry for the separation from Him but also for a reunion with the Beloved. While they suffer from the pain of separation from the Beloved, their hearts are full of spiritual joy. Their souls are like birds which dwell in the heaven.

The tears sometimes are the product of *ma'rifatullah* (deeply knowing God), *muhabbatullah* (love of God) and *makhafatullah* (fear of God). The tears which do not come from the heart are deceitful. Crying and weeping for the sake of God is based on His love which sometimes is reflected in moaning. Suffering and crying for others is considered a form of worship and the tradition of all Prophets.

The great scholars cry when they are born, just like other humans. However, for them, shedding tears becomes part of their lives until they die. When they run out of tears, then their hearts and souls suffer and cry. Sometimes the eyes, heart, and soul cry together. They cry and weep

165 Ismail Haqqi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 5.9.2016.

166 Al-Jilani, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 5.9.2016.

167 Ibn Arabi, ibid, altafsir.com.

168 Gülen, "Bence Tam Ağlama Mevsimi".

169 Rumi, Mathnawi, Book 6, www.sacred-texts.com/isl/masnavi/msn06.htm. Retrieved 29.09.2016.

so much they make others cry and weep as well. Seeing the perfection of the arts of God in the universe leads to the shedding of tears. The destiny of all great scholars is not being understood by their contemporaries and suffering beneath the hands of oppressive rulers. Instead of rebelling against oppression and tyranny, they reflect their civil disobedience through suffering and tears.

For Gülen, tears are shed from the eyes of sincere and tender-hearted people. Their suffering for humanity with the whole of the body is manifested as streaming tears.[170] He continues, "the Qur'an narrates the stories of people who cry as exemplary. Every teardrop is a witness of the compassionate heart and it is as valuable as the *khawthar* pool in Paradise.[171] Therefore, the Prophet seeks refuge from eyes that do not shed tears as he takes refuge from Satan."[172]

According to Gülen, shedding tears for his/her sin is a step in spiritual ascension.[173] Indeed, the shedding of tears is the quickest and shortest way of acceptance of *dua* (supplication) in the sight of God because there is nothing which can purely manifest the enthusiasm of the heart, except tears.[174] He says that disobedience to the commands of God, committing big sins and crimes is like an invitation to calamities and tribulations. Many tribes and nations are destroyed or have collapsed because of the transgression of their peoples. The devoted ones, however, who are tender-hearted and shed tears for their sins and others' transgressions, are like a lightning conductor protecting against sins.[175] As Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says, "because of a person's tears, God saves the whole community."[176]

Gülen says that saints view tears as the water of life for the revival of a spiritually dead person and as the breath of Jesus which gave life

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170 Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* 4, 113.

171 Ibid., 115.

172 Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fathu'l-Bari*, 11/139 in Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* 4, 115.

173 Gülen, *Beyan*, 113.

174 Ibid., 114.

175 Fethullah Gülen, İnancın Gölgesinde 1 (Izmir: Nil Yayınları, 2011), 74.

176 Tirmidhi

to the dead. He continues that tears guided Adam to be forgiven.[177] There is nothing falling on the earth that is more valuable than tears in the sight of God because all tears falling on the earth will eventually give life spiritually to others.[178] Tears which are shed from human eyes are the mercy of God.[179] In the sight of saints, tears are more valuable than the fountains of Paradise because each teardrop is like an elixir which can put out hellfire. Abraham invoked "*hasbi hasbi*" (God is sufficient) with tears in the catapult when he was cast into the fire, and this caused the fire to be cool and safe for him (Qur'an, 21:69).[180] Rumi says, "When the tears course down my cheeks, they are a proof of the beauty and grace of my Beloved."[181] According to Gülen, the saints, even if they unintentionally look at something *haram* (unlawful) only once, shed tears for the rest of their lives. Even at the point of death, they suffer for such sins and still they are critical of themselves for committing them.

Umar, the second caliph, despite his bravery and uncompromising nature, would cry with a broken-hearted person and made others cry with them as well.[182] Such a tender-hearted person is "one who fears God, sometimes sighs and sometimes weeps, especially when alone, in an attempt to extinguish the pain of being separate from Him as well as the fire of hell, which is the greatest distance between him and God."[183] A time comes when they express these pangs with sighs from the depth of the heart, and also when they put these feelings into invocations and tears in seclusion. Those with a self-accusing soul advance along the intermediate corridor between carnal appetites and

177 Gülen, *Beyan*, 116

178 Gülen, *Beyan* 118

179 Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil* 1, 51

180 Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil* 1, 52–53

181 Rumi, Book 4, www.sacred-texts.com/isl/masnavi/msn04.htm. Retrieved 29.09.2016.

182 Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil* 1, 54.

183 Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* 1, available on www.fgulen.com/en/fethullah-Gülen s-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1/24731-khawf-and-khashya-fear-and-reverence. Retrieved 07.09.2016.

sins, and spiritual peace.[184]

People who have not been able to make their inner worlds into a honeycomb of belief and knowledge and love of God are unaware of love and the meaning of tears. Such people live all their lives bereft of or wearied of pursuing excitement and emotions and can never feel the deep spiritual pleasure of pouring themselves out to God in a solitary corner with sighs and tears. Even though it has been witnessed that such crude souls weep, their weeping resembles the weeping of children whose toys have been taken from their hands. Weeping is, in fact, the voice or translation of purity of spirit and tender-heartedness. Human faculties are stirred up by this voice, and the slopes of the heart begin to green; spring arrives in the human world of emotions. How well expressed are the following words of Rumi:

> If clouds were not to weep, the grass would not smile;
> If infants were not to weep, the milk would not flow;
> You should know that unless there is weeping,
> The Lord of the lords does not give milk.[185]

Gülen says that some of God's friends say in the same strain, "Those who do not weep today will not be able to be saved from sighing and mourning tomorrow (in the Hereafter)."[186] This must have been said in accordance with the Prophetic supplication, "O God! I seek refuge in You from eyes that do not weep."[187] Sometimes suffering for others' guidance is revealed as shedding tears. When a person reaches the spiritual

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184 Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* 2, available on www.fgulen.com/en/fethullah-Gülen s-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-2/25742-sayr-u-suluk-journeying-and-initiation. Retrieved 07.09.2016.

185 Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* 4, available on www.fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-4/47815-putting-an-end-to-a-long-journey. Retrieved 15.04.2015.

186 Fethullah Gülen, "Taşlaşan Kalbler ve Gözyaşları," www.herkul.org/kirik-testi/taslasan-kalbler-ve-gozyaslari. Retrieved 25.04.2017.

187 Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* 4, fgulen.com/en/fethullah-Gülens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-4/47815-putting-an-end-to-a-long-journey. Retrieved 07.09.2016.

level of complete nothingness and realises his/her defects or imperfection, this is reflected as tears in daily life. Sometimes a higher degree of compassion and mercy in an individual is transformed into tears. As Ibn Arabi mentions, a saint may cry, for descending from an angelic spiritual level to a normal human life causes him/her to cry. A saint may cry because she or he could not complete her or his mission as she or he wishes. Al-Alusi states that crying and weeping is an essential attribute of a real scholar. If a scholar does not weep, he or she cannot get the benefit of his or her knowledge.[188]

Through crying, hearts and minds are conquered, animosity reduced, conflicts ended, peace and social harmony established. It can be said that those who cry contribute or lead to social changes by their tears. The shared destiny of most of those who cry for others is not to be understood by their contemporaries. Their tears are valued after their death like the art works of eminent artists. They see bursting into tears as one of the most acceptable *duas* (supplications) in the sight of God.

After studying and analysing the life of more than fifty of the most influential scholars in Islamic history, it can be said that their works are the product of suffering, crying and sighing. While their eyes well with tears, also their hearts bleed and the soul is joined to both through suffering. Gülen's life is very similar to these great scholars, specifically, Hasan al-Basri (642–728), who had marks of tears on his face because of crying; so too do Gülen's eyes remain swollen.

3.4 The tears of Gülen

Gülen is known as one of the most influential, most controversial, and also probably the most tearful, weeping and sighing scholars of our time. He has been known for his tearful eyes since his youth. He prayed to God, sighing like Abraham, crying like Jacob until people began to think he was a madman when he was a teenager. What makes him cry and what makes his audience cry?

Gülen, as mentioned in Chapter 1, grew up in a family in which his grandparents and parents shed tears mainly for spiritual reasons. His grandfather Şamil Ağa had tearful eyes. His grandmother, Munise

188 Al-Alusi, *Ruhu l Maâni*. altafsir.com.

Khatun, was known as the lady who cried a lot when she invoked the Names of God. Gülen's parents, Ramiz Efendi and Refia, also had tearful eyes. As mentioned in the first chapter, when Imam Ramiz Efendi reached the age of sixty-four, he cried. The reason was that he felt that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived sixty-three years and living more than him, made him burst into tears.

Gülen says, "My grandmother was like my parents who were very generous. There is no one like her. If she did not have a few guests at home daily, she would feel sorrow and shed tears. We would receive visitors from various backgrounds, including saintly people. My grandmother would love to offer everything that we have at home. She often would cry and weep for remembrance of God, sometimes so many times during day and night."[189] It seems Munise Khatun, the Gülen's grandmother, left a permanent mark on him regarding shedding tears. When both grandfather and grandmother passed away on the same night within one hour, when he was a teenager, Gülen cried a lot for them and asked God to be with them. Since then, tears have become a part of Gülen's daily life.

When Gülen studied the life of the *sahabah*, the Companions of the Prophet, their life stories would touch his heart, and he would burst into tears. In most of his sermons and public and private talks, Gülen's eyes brim with tears when he mentions the heroism of *sahabah*, the devotion of great saints and scholars, and their piety, asceticism, altruism and sincerity. When he was attending the study circle of Muhammed Lütfi Efendi, who had tearful eyes, Gülen witnessed and experienced tears for a deep love of God and the Prophet, for Lütfi Efendi so often would burst into tears when he mentioned God or Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It can be said that the tears of Lütfi Efendi, and Gülen's parents and grandparents have left a permanent effect and rooted a very compassionate nature in the heart and soul of Gülen.

After Lütfi Efendi had passed away, Gülen began to attend the *Risale-i Nur* study circle in Erzurum with Said Nursi's students. One day, the students of Said Nursi received a letter in which Said Nursi sent his salaam (greetings) to Gülen. He was so excited about it that he shed tears. For Gülen, it was the happiest time for him. He went to Lale Pasha Mosque and spent the whole night offering supplication and begging God. He

189 Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla* 3, 73.

prayed, "O my God, dearest God, please include me spiritually in the Nur movement (which was established by Said Nursi). I would like to dedicate my whole life entirely to the service of the Qur'an and faith by being one of them." Then he shed tears and sighed until the Morning Prayer. "The whole night, I only asked this from my Lord," Gülen stated.

He prayed at a young age: "O God, I ask and beg You for shedding tears and making me cry to deserve your mercy and because of yearning not to be away from You. Make me cry and show Your clemency to my soul which is dark like the night. Make me moan because this is necessary to be forgiven for my insincere crying and weeping...O my God, make me *awwâh* (like Prophet Abraham), and to be like the Prophet Job."[190] Shedding tears, he continued, "O my God, make me cry a lot until people think that I am a mad person."[191] Gülen says that "in the morning, one of my close friends, Hatem Hodja, saw me in the mosque and shared his dream with me. In his dream, Said Nursi sent a letter to me. Now, I began to shed tears of happiness. I will never forget that moment in my life."

Gülen public image is of a learned scholar, a teary-eyed, saintly mystic and a highly passionate activist. He is famous within Turkey for his passionate and spiritual sermons bringing tens of thousands of listeners to tears along with him.[192]

The first time the author heard about Fethullah Gülen was at the age of thirteen at a Nur study circle[193] in Adıyaman, a city in the southeast of Turkey. A university student mentioned how Gülen was educating the students, showing his devotion, and performing the *Tahajjud* (night vigil Prayer) every night while weeping. Then, in 1975, I read his book "*Hitap Çiçekleri*" (Flowers of Speech). A year later, I was able to

190 Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil* 1, 55.

191 Fethullah Gülen, *Sızıntı*, September, 1979.

192 Özalp, "Muhammad Fethullah Gülen", 37

193 Despite pressure from the secular government, Said Nursi's works would be studied in smaller study circles through Turkey. Between 1930 and 1960 there were more than 1,500 prosecutions of those who read Nursi's books and sometimes they were imprisoned. This could not stop the growth of the study circles in Turkey. Nevertheless, this oppression and persecution continued until the mid-1980s to a certain extent.

listen to one of his sermons on a tape cassette which was about youth and chivalry while shedding tears. Unfortunately, I was not able to meet him for almost two decades, despite my wishes. After moving to Australia, I continued to listen to his sermons on video recordings in the late 1980s. Later, whenever I listened to his tapes or video recordings, sometimes I could not stop myself from bursting into tears.

I have analysed over five hundred of Gülen's speeches and sermons. I asked questions of his close associates about the reasons for his crying. He weeps during the delivery of almost all his sermons and talks. His close associates told me that Gülen has been crying during the delivery of his speeches since the age of fifteen. When he came to Sydney in 1992, I had the opportunity to visit him for the first time. With tearful eyes, he talked to a small gathering in a house. I was very impressed at the level of his in-depth knowledge and humility. Although I was not able to attend his two sermons in Sydney and Melbourne, later I heard that he broke down in tears during the delivery.

In August 1997, I had another opportunity to visit him in New Jersey, and I stayed at the house where he lived for about twenty days. He would give short talks after performing the daily ritual Prayer (*Salat*) and sometimes after the breakfast, lunch and dinner as well. He would break into tears during each talk about spirituality. He also made others weep. His talks included the love of God, the Prophet, his Companions, great scholars and figures of Islam, serving religion, and various topics related to spirituality. He avoided talking about politics.

After he went to the United States for some medical treatment in 1999, I had the opportunity to visit him very many times, while I was working and studying in New York and Boston up until 2007. I witnessed that almost every time he talked, he shed tears. I can give hundreds of examples, but it would be outside the scope of this research. To understand why Gülen weeps so often, however, it is necessary to give a few examples based on testimonials from his close friends and some which I personally witnessed.

3.5 Testimonials from friends

Irmak and Mefkure TV channels in Turkey made a documentary called "*Geçmişten İzler*" (Marks of the Past) about the history of the Hizmet Movement in its early years. More than fifty people who played very

important voluntary roles in the movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s were interviewed. Almost all shed tears when they recalled those years and especially Gülen's weeping, piety, altruism, hard work, commitment to serving the community, suffering for others, firmness in his faith, and so on. Gülen's tears had a deep effect on their minds, hearts, and souls. When recalling those days, they still felt like they were reliving those moments.

One of his students stated that once, Gülen, his eyes filled with tears, came out of his room with a scroll of paper. He wanted to burn the manuscript because he did not want to put it in the trash bin, and there was no recycle bin. We later realised that he had written an article about *Ahadiyyat* and *Wahdaniyyat* (Oneness and Unity of God) in a few days. Gülen did not see himself as worthy of writing such an article about God. Therefore, he thought that the article was not worthy and he wanted to destroy it. We asked him to rethink and revise it again instead of destroying it. He was very kind and accepted our request. He returned to his room still shedding tears.

Rıfat Sayar, who has known Gülen since the early 1970s, said that "*Erkekler ağlamaz*" (a Turkish proverb which means "men never cry") is like a macho culture. After attending his sermons, Sayar saw how Gülen and his congregation were crying while he was preaching about God, His Messenger and the Companions. He says, "Then, I changed my mind to 'men cry so much.' By shedding tears, we have deepened our faith in God, and we found our Lord." He said that "we would go to his sermon to shed tears, which in turn would strengthen our faith and motivate us to serve Islam." Sayar calls Gülen "*Yağmur Gözlü*" which means "rainy-eyed." He uses this because the tears of Gülen drop from his eyes like raindrops fall from heaven. Sayar said, "Whenever I pray behind him, I cannot stop my eyes flowing with tears." In his interview with Irmak TV in 2015, Ahmet Haskesen said, "Gülen has always cried in his talks or sermons and private study circle since I have known him."

Malik Ejder recalls the late 1970s: "One of my friends took me to Manisa for Gülen's sermon. When I wanted to enter the mosque, it was full of young people, a thing which I had never seen in my life. Gülen started preaching, and everyone was crying. I was shocked. No one was bashing, or torturing them. Why were they crying? I was told that they

were crying because of the preaching about the Prophet and his Companions. Gülen was crying as well. I was so affected by those tears."

3.5.1 Crying over separation

Ahmet Haskesen tells a story. Osman Aykut, one of Said Nursi students who respected and loved Gülen because of his Islamic service, piety, and character. Aykut was Hizmet Movement volunteer in Turgutlu, one of those who took responsibility for setting up projects and fund raising for them. One day before he passed away, unexpectedly, he was so keen to talk to Gülen. So we called Cevdet Türkyolu who attends to Gülen's needs at the retreat centre in Pennsylvania. However, unexpectedly, Gülen picked up the phone. Aykut had hearing loss and did not realise that he was talking to Gülen. He repeatedly said that he would like to speak with Gülen. Finally, he realised that it was Gülen on the phone. He could not talk but started weeping and then sobbing; on the other end, Gülen was crying, and he could not talk to Aykut either. For about seven minutes both cried to each other without saying a single word. Then Aykut hung up the phone and the next day he passed away.

The son of Said Nursi's student Mustafa Birlik, Abdullah Ünal Birlik, recalls, "My father had a very high respect for Gülen. He visited our house many times from 1967. Gülen was like one of our family members. My dad would always visit him from the late 1960s. When my dad was very sick in the hospital, Gülen phoned him from the USA. He was not able to talk but he could utter just a few words. Then my father hung up the phone. He began crying for almost twenty to twenty-five minutes. Later, I was told that Gülen also cried for half an hour. My dad asked me to read Said Nursi's books and also to always be part of the Hizmet Movement as his last request. In addition, he told me to visit Gülen regularly."

3.5.2 Hours of crying

In Chapter 2, I have already described Gülen's grief and distress at seeing a tree branch cut off, and living creatures maltreated. He is known to weep for hours and grieve for days over the damage humans do to their surroundings, the environment, and to God's creatures—actions which might be seen as sins or bad deeds sometimes. His tears also flow freely

when he sees good deeds have been or are likely to be thwarted.

In 1999, Hizmet participants in the United States planned to set up a school in one of the states. The foundation's board of education obtained permission from the Department of Education to open the school in early September 1999. They rented a building which needed renovating. The head of the foundation's board came to visit Gülen in mid-August. Gülen asked him if they would be able to open the school in September. He said that it was not possible as the renovation would not be completed by that time, and it might take another two to three months, although the contractor was supposed to have finished it by the end of August. Hearing that, Gülen became very sad, which could be read from his face. After a few words about the importance of education, Gülen asked him to go back and find a way to open the school for the fall season, otherwise, it would be delayed for one year. Gülen would normally give a short talk or have a conversation during the meal and after his daily Prayer, which was performed in congregation. That day he was very upset because of the news and he did not talk or converse with anyone for the whole day and night. The building in which he lived was not sound-proof, so any voice in the next room could be heard.

That night, I was sleeping in the second floor in a room very close above Gülen's room. Around one o'clock in the morning, I woke up to Gülen's supplication with sobbing. I listened to his crying unintentionally, and I could not stop my own tears. The sound of his sobbing was like that of someone who just had lost several of his children in a traffic accident and who was standing before their dead bodies. I listened for a while and then made my ablution for the *Tahajjud* Prayer. After performing it, I wanted to sleep, but Gülen was still offering supplications with sobbing. I tried to sleep but I could not. I felt very sorry for him, and my heartrate increased for a moment. I thought that I was going to have a heart attack. I could not stand because of feeling very sad and of his sobbing. I made the decision to change my room and sleep somewhere else. I woke up before dawn for the Morning Prayer and then performed it behind Gülen. Usually, after the Morning Prayer, two or three pages from Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* would be read in a study circle and sometimes Gülen would comment on them. This time, however, Gülen did not stay and went to his room. I was surprised and asked the person who attended to his needs why Gülen did not stay for the book reading.

He said that Gülen had not been able to sleep the whole night due to having received such sad news about the school. Indeed, I was shocked. I have never seen or heard of anyone who cried for hours because an educational institution was not going to open. I will never forget the experience and it was a lesson for me about the importance of education which I could not have learned by studying dozens of books and hundreds of articles. Fortunately, the school which had made Gülen cry for hours did open that fall. The board rented temporary buildings for two weeks and began teaching in them until the renovation of the building was completed.

3.5.3 Children's education above life itself

As a great advocate of education, Gülen always encourages his followers and anyone to open educational institutions, even a small one like a cultural centre. For Gülen, educating children means contributing to the society in which they live. Also, through a good education, the seed of good morality can be planted in their hearts and minds. This will lead to a prosperous and a healthy society.

A post-graduate student said that Gülen had strongly encouraged him and his friends in Long Island, New York, to open a cultural centre to educate children every time they visited him. Finally, he and his friends rented a place to open the cultural centre and the student visited Gülen again to let him know. Upon hearing this, Gülen became very happy. After performing Friday Prayer, Gülen invited the student to his room, where he opened the drawer of his study desk and showed him some money. Gülen told him to take the money for furnishing the cultural centre. Gülen added, "This money is for my medication, but the education of two children is more important than my life. Please, take it and spend it on furnishing the centre." As Gülen was saying these words, his eyes flowed with tears. The student wept as well. As Gülen had heart disease, was a diabetic, suffered from hypertension and another illness, he definitely would need that money for his medication. Yet, he viewed and preferred the education of two children as more important than his life. Initially, the student hesitated to take the money. How could he take the money which was needed for a great scholar's medication? But Gülen insisted he took it. So the student accepted it and spent it on purchasing tables, chairs, and other items for the cultural centre. When the student

narrated this story to me, he also shed tears. Later, he learned that the money was Gülen's savings from the royalties of his publications for his livelihood and medications.

3.5.4 Mourning an officer

In early May in 2000, PKK terrorists shot down a helicopter and wounded its pilot, whom Gülen had known for a long time. Gülen's doctor read the news from an online media source. He let Gülen know about the attack and that the officer was in intensive care in Turkey. Gülen was very upset about the injured officer. After two or three days, the pilot passed away. Gülen's doctor was hesitant to tell him because he was aware that the news would have a very negative impact on Gülen's health. He consulted with a few of Gülen's close associates who were at present. They made the decision to let Gülen know when his hypertension and sugar levels were normal and under control. His doctor would check his blood pressure and sugar at least three times a day. After lunch, Gülen looked well, and his sugar level and blood pressure were normal.

It was a sunny day. Gülen went out of the building and sat at the back door where he could get some sunlight. He conversed with a few people who were around him. His doctor broke the news and told him that the officer could not be saved, and he had passed away in the hospital. Gülen started weeping, and he collapsed in a corner of the chair for a while. Then, he wanted to go to his room on the second floor but he could not as he had no energy to move. The people around him tried to help, but Gülen declined. He clung to the wall and slowly walked and, after taking few steps, he sat and wept for a while and then he was able to go to his room. Later, I asked the person who looked after him about Gülen's condition. He told me that Gülen had continued to cry for more than an hour in his room.

3.5.5 Shedding tears for the guests

From time to time, Gülen's old companions from Turkey, or another part of the world would visit him in the United States. When they met, the memories of beautiful or sad days of the past were topics of conversation for them. Some of these memories of the past caused Gülen to shed tears. Once, in 2006, a group of elders from the city of Kayseri came to

visit Gülen. After staying a week, they wanted to leave at around 10 p.m. for their flight. Gülen was sick, and his private doctor told him that he needed to rest. However, Gülen wanted to see them off up to the gate of the retreat centre. This action is considered a *sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet. The person who wanted to pick up the guests at 10 p.m. was late. Despite his sickness and weariness, Gülen did not want to rest. The guests also told him that he needed to rest. But Gülen would not. He started weeping, and he made the guests cry as well. Gülen continued to shed tears for a while. When the driver arrived, Gülen saw them off and returned to his room in tears. For how long he kept weeping, I could not ask. He keeps crying much longer than others over separations. Osman Gürbüz Özkara said that whenever Gülen sees someone off, tears flow from his eyes. Mehmet Eldem reported, "Once, after a visit, Gülen said, 'Whenever visitors come I feel happy, but when they leave I feel as if a part of my body is torn and that it goes with them.'"

Eldem continued, "Once a group of old friends of Gülen, including me, visited him in Pennsylvania. The aim was to persuade him to return to Turkey in 2003. We entered his room and sat down. Gülen welcomed us. Then we stopped talking for a while and kept silent. All of us hesitated to talk and invite him. Finally, Yusuf Pekmezci from Izmir said, 'The residents, your friends, and your students in Izmir have missed you a lot. They would love to see you [in Izmir].' All of us, including Gülen, began weeping for almost half an hour."

Haydar Eraslan, who has known Gülen since the 1970s, recalls, "I was taken by a friend to listen to Gülen's sermon on Friday. I could not find room inside the mosque. I thought that there were funeral services and that was why it was very crowded. Gülen was talking about the Prophet and his Companions. I looked to my right and then to my left: the people were crying. I thought again that it looked as if people were crying because of their deceased. After a while, I became so impressed by Gülen's preaching. The whole congregation was bursting into tears. Gülen was speaking in tears as well."

Osman Gürbüz Özkara recalls, "In 1997, two friends and I visited him in New Jersey. Gülen greeted us at the gate. He was excited to see us. Then he hugged Yusuf Pekmezci and cried for five minutes. Yusuf Pekmezci had many memories of him. He told us that when he hears the noise of a plane flying over the house, it makes him cry. He thinks

that it is possible that he may catch a plane to go to Turkey. He was very homesick, and his eyes were full of tears."

3.6 Why Gülen cries

If the spirit (*ruh*) does not suffer, the heart does not cry, and only a crying heart will manifest as tears in the eyes. If someone does not spend time with Gülen, specifically when he talks and delivers sermons, it will be difficult to believe how he cries. Gülen's crying can be classified as two types, namely for positive and negative reasons. Crying for an increase in depth of knowledge of God, feeling the love of the Prophet, his Companions, and saints, experiencing numerous blessings of God, and observing the beautiful results of serving humanity can be considered positive. Shedding tears for others' suffering, bursting into tears as a reflection of a bleeding heart due to injustice and tyranny in the world can be regarded as the negative aspect. Gülen does not cry over trivial daily events, or political or financial or business failures.

He has been suffering and crying for many reasons since his early years. Based on Gülen's works, speeches, sermons, close associates' testimonials, my personal observation and humble understanding, his crying, weeping, and groaning has several causes.

First, contemplating, observing, and comprehending the significant arts of creation in depth and realising the wonders of the universe causes him to cry. Like an artist who understands the fineness of a piece of art and sees the details of the work more than ordinary people do, Gülen resembles other great scholars in Islamic history who grasp the wisdom of creation. To simplify it, such wisdom is like the observation of a shepherd, scientist, and saint looking at a tree. The first will see the tree under which he can rest in the shade and eat from its fruit. The scientist will observe its various parts, the roots, trunk, leaves, and fresh fruit, and how all of these function: "The roots of a tree serve to anchor it to the ground and gather water and nutrients to transfer to all parts of the tree. They are also used for reproduction, defense, survival, energy storage and many other purposes."[194] The wood gives structural strength to the trunk which supports the plant as it grows larger. Leaves are structured in such a way as to

194 Tony Russell and Catherine Cutler, *The World Encyclopedia of Trees* (NY: Lorenz Books, 2003), 14–15.

maximise exposure to light without shading each other. Also, the scientist can examine the nutrition of fruits and their health benefits.

A Prophet or saint will be able to see the wondrous art of God in every part of the tree and he may even hear the tree's glorification of God.[195] Such human beings can comprehend the correlation between the tree and everything in the universe and how the Divine Names are reflected on it. They can view with great pleasure the perfect order between soil, water, seed, roots, leaves, branches, and fruit.

Nursi who influenced Gülen defines this perspective as follows: "Looking upon each created thing as a piece of the puzzle of the universe, with the parts in harmony with each other[196] is a form of worship." He argues that "the reality of every being is based on one Name of God or many. Indeed, one group of the most learned of the saints stated that, even only on appearance, as many as twenty manifestations of the impressed of the Divine Names may be seen on a single living creature."[197] The connections and harmony between these Names necessitate a relationship between all creations.

Observing and loving such beauty of arts will lead to love of the Maker. Then, naturally, there will be a very strong desire to see the Creator. Since this is not possible in this temporary life, such a separation from the Beloved makes the spiritual elite cry. Gülen says that "the lovers of God cool down their hearts by shedding tears." Sometimes when Gülen talks about the wonders of the universe and arts of creation, he weeps. He says, "It is not possible for one who does not believe to have true knowledge of God; a breast devoid of knowledge of God cannot have Divine excitement, and a spirit bereft of such excitement cannot shed tears from love or yearning for or fear and awe of God."[198]

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195 "The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting." (Qur'an, 17:44)

196 Salih Yücel and Selma Sivri, "Said Nursi's approach to the environment: A spiritual view on the book of universe," *Quarterly Insights* (4) (2009), 77–96.

197 Nursi, *The Words*, 656.

198 Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* 4, fgulen.com/en/fethullah-Gülen s-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-4/47815-putting-an-end-to-a-long-journey. Retrieved 07.09.16.

Second, it has been the destiny of all great scholars not to be understood by their contemporaries; even sometimes close associates have made them cry. Gülen is not understood either. He has mentioned this in a close circle many times and his students testify to this too. These scholars have had very high goals and almost all of them could not accomplish what they wanted for various reasons and obstacles. Therefore, they suffer and sigh for it. It was mentioned above, how Gülen cried for almost a whole night because of hearing that a school was not going to be opened as planned. According to his close associates, failure of any educational or other project makes Gülen sad, even sometimes sick and it causes him cry in public and private as well.

Although Gülen has no worldly ambitions, those who govern Turkey have feared him, due to his influence, since the late 1960s. They have worked very hard and developed many projects and plans to halt his activities. Sometimes these plans include slander, discrediting him or his activities, oppression, torture, imprisonment, assassination attempts, and all kinds of dirty political games. Yet, such scholars, including Gülen, are very devoted and bound to religious and ethical principles contrary to the Machiavellian political games of their enemies. For such scholars' strategies are easily known by their foes. Instead of playing political games, they stick to their ethical principles and do not compromise them. Thus, they suffer. Similarly, Gülen has not compromised his moral principles in the face of his enemies' plans. While his opponents or enemies have made many plans to destroy him and the Hizmet Movement, Gülen has always viewed them as potential good Muslims or *insan al-kamil*, perfect persons. Such approaches make conditions extremely difficult for him and the Hizmet Movement. The only option is to complain of his suffering and grief to God by shedding tears. There are hundreds of examples in Gülen's life. Thousands of times he has written or said to his followers that it is "*tam ağlama zamanı*" which means it is "just the right time for flowing tears" to seek God's aid because there is no other option for Gülen.

Third, Gülen cries out of love for the Prophets, particularly Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his Companions and the great scholars in Islamic history. He delivered fifty-three sermons about the Prophet Muhammad from 1989 to 1990 in Valide Sultan Mosque in Istanbul. He did not deliver any of these sermons about the Prophet without bursting into tears. He

also often shed tears when he taught about the Prophet and his Companions' ascetic life, suffering, devotion, altruism and so on. When he narrates any stories that made the Prophet and his Companions cry, it makes Gülen burst into tears in his study circle as well. In this he resembles Hasan al-Basri, Umar ibn Abdu'l-Aziz[199] and Abdulqadr al-Jilani, whose tears left permanent and visible marks on their faces.

Fourth, he cries because of injustice and tyranny in the world. Gülen says that "if, wherever there is a tragedy, there is immense pain, I too suffer from that pain."[200] He has made this statement many times, whenever a tragedy or disaster has happened, including the flood in the Philippines in 2016. Since he cannot avoid this and has no power to prevent disasters, he expresses himself by bursting tears instead of using the rhetorical language of politics or radicalism. According to the students of his study circle, hearing news of injustice, oppression, torture, and killing of innocent people or animals makes Gülen weep. This results in reducing sorrow, depression, and anger.[201] So, his disapproval or civil disobedience to oppression is reflected as tears in his eyes. It is not just shedding tears but also, sometimes, his heart and soul cry as well. In this state, he becomes extremely weary and has no energy to talk or even to move.

Fifth, in a pitiful state, Gülen cries for the wrongdoing of others. He does not want to hurt anyone nor for anyone to be hurt. As a result, his compassion or affection transforms him into a pitiful state and leads to his bursting into tears. He says that "while most people are in an impassive

199 For details of his crying and weeping, see: Al-Isfahani, *Hilyatu'l Awliya*, V 5 (Beirut: Daru'l Kitab al Ilmiyya, n.d), 253–323.

200 Fethullah Gülen, 390. Nağme: Filipinler İçin "Kimse Yok Mu." www.herkul.org/tag/ates-dustugu-yeri-yakar/.

201 Studies show that crying releases stress hormones or toxins from the body, and as a result, reduces tension. A good cry can also be a good way to kill bacteria. Tears contain the fluid lysozyme — also found in human milk, semen, mucus and saliva — that can kill 90 to 95 percent of all bacteria in just five to 10 minutes. It also can be self-soothing and elevate mood better than any antidepressant. For the benefits of crying, see Lizette Borreli, "Cry It Out: 6 Surprising Health Benefits Of Shedding A Few Tears," May 19, 2015, *Medical Daily*, www.medicaldaily.com/cry-it-out-6-surprising-health-benefits-shedding-few-tears-333952.

state, for some it is necessary to weep for humanity. If it were my task or if I could, I would constantly cry for twenty-four hours to soften others' hearts. Even I would cry like Jacob until I lose my sight."[202]

Sixth, every piece of God's favour or blessing, or the success of his followers in the service of humanity pleases and excites Gülen and causes him to cry. Although such a state does not last as long as his suffering for others, it still happens often. He considers tears of happiness as oxygen for his life.

Seventh, Gülen cries for the disloyalty and laziness of some his friends in the service of Islam. He says, "Many times, I have wept alone in my room because of the disloyalty of a friend whose loyalty I expected."[203] However, this crying is transformed not into hatred but pity for his disloyal friends. The supplication with suffering and shedding tears in solitude strengthens good deeds and will power.[204] According to Gülen, stone-hearted people do not cry. Neglecting the needs and suffering of others will gradually lead people to becoming stone-hearted. Commenting on the hadith in which the Prophet seeks refuge from heresy and in a similar way seeks refuge from the eyes that do not cry, Gülen states that the Prophet meant to say that not shedding tears is equal to heresy.[205]

Sometimes tears are the products of disloyalty to devotion. To him, his religion is conveyed through suffering, tears, altruism, sacrificing wealth, even sometimes self, for the sake of God. It is an important ethical principle of Gülen not to retaliate against those who betray him. He generally neglects his personal rights in responding to accusations, but if it involves Islam or the Hizmet Movement, then he replies according to philosophical principles or in a diplomatic way. Gülen would like any work to be done at the level of *ihsan*, which means as if God and His Messenger observe it and are pleased with it. This is highly idealistic for many, but Gülen always has high expectations and aims.

Eighth, Gülen sheds tears when sharing the pains and sufferings of the oppressed and victims of misfortune. He manifests his helplessness by crying or weeping. Rumi summarises this feeling of pity in the

202 Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla* 5, 46.

203 Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri*, 4, 147.

204 Fethullah Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken*, (Izmir: Nil Yayınları, 2011), 116.

205 Ibn Hajar, *Fathu'l-Bari*, 11/139 in Gülen, *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler*, 115.

following lines:

> Wheresoever thou findest blood on the roads,
> Trace it, and 'tis tears of blood from my eyes.
> My words are thunder, and these sighs and tears
> Are drawn by it as rain from the clouds.
> I am distracted between speaking and weeping.
> Shall I weep, or shall I speak, or what shall I do?
> If I speak, my weeping ceases.[206]

Many great saints and scholars, instead of expressing themselves in words, do not speak but shed tears. They hope that through bursting into tears, many hearts may be softened and problems can be solved. Gülen says that it is likely that the problems which cannot be cracked by force or through wars may one day unexpectedly be resolved by supplications to God and shedding tears[207] because it is not a scholar's or a saint's duty to solve problems by force in Islamic jurisprudence. If necessary, using power is a state responsibility, not that of individuals. For Gülen, the Prophets and saints moan and shed tears for all humanity to protect them from crying because of the result of wrong doing.[208]

Alaattin Kırkan recalls that when Russia invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Gülen cried a lot and then fainted. When Israel attacked Jenin and killed hundreds of Palestinians, he fainted and was taken to the hospital with a suspected heart attack. According to his students and close associates, Gülen weeps when he watches sad news on television. Many instances like this have been reported of him.

Ninth, Gülen cries because of his and others' defects, shortcomings, and weaknesses. He views his previous deeds or actions as not having been done properly or as he wished. Even if the actions were done properly, he still thinks that they could have been done better. Gülen says, "The tears I have many times shed over the black lines [his writing], which I regard as my sins of thinking, are witnesses to this. I have many

206 Rumi, Mathnawi, Book 3, www.sacred-texts.com/isl/masnavi/msn03.htm. Retrieved 29.09.2016

207 Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil* 8, 168.

208 Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil* 9, 158.

times trembled with the consideration that I have not been able to present the elevated transcending truths in accordance with their essential reality or real nature, and have nearly decided to give up continuing to write about them."[209] According to al-Zamakhshari, all saints and righteous people cry even for their minor sins.[210]

Finally, like all other human beings, Gülen cries for the loss of any of his relatives or friends, and also for inevitable physical pain.

3.7 Criticism

There have been hundreds of comments in the Turkish media and many political Islamists, syndicate columnists and politicians that have argued that Gülen's tears are for showing off or fake, like an actor or actress who cries in the movies. For them, by shedding tears, Gülen is deceiving people. First of all, none of these accusers have been near Gülen. Second, they cannot provide any evidence for their argument except polemics aimed at discrediting him. It is not logical or possible for someone to deceive people with fake tears for almost sixty years. If Gülen's sermons are analysed carefully, it can be seen how he cries and weeps thousands of times in the mosques. Those who have been near him cry when they recall Gülen's tears during his sermons and public and private talks. I have also analysed the life of more than thirty great scholars who cried and who made their listeners cry. These scholars cried when they talked about the Prophet, his Companions, about life in the Hereafter, for their friends, during or after *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and when reciting the Qur'an or supplications. Similarly, Gülen also cries on the same issues.

3.8 Analysis

Weeping, crying, and sighing are important attributes of spiritual travellers who can be classified into three groups. The first group is those who have an in-depth knowledge at the degree of *ilm al-yaqin* (knowledge of the truth) and practice. From time to time they may weep or shed tears

209 Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* 4, www.fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-4/47815-putting-an-end-to-a-long-journey retrieved 22.12.2016

210 Zimakhshari, ibid., altafsir.com.

from their eyes only. They comprehend and digest knowledge mainly through reason. The second group is those whose eyes and hearts cry together. They are spiritually at the degree of *ayn al-yaqin* (witnessing the truth). At this stage, all items of their physical body and all the subtleties of the heart share their crying, besides comprehending and digesting knowledge through the mind and heart. They feel sorrow with their all subtleties. The third group combines the eyes, heart, and soul in weeping, crying and sometimes sighing. They are at the level of *haqq al-yaqin* (the truth of certitude) spiritually. This group is always on a spiritual journey, without slowing down, at a certain speed which depends on each individual's understanding and experiencing *ma'rifatullah* (deep knowledge of God), *muhabbatullah* (deep love God), *makhafatullah* (fear of God) and *dhawq ruhani* (spiritual joy). They are so attached to the place where they live and the spiritual level where they are that since their spiritual journey is a continuous one, leaving behind the physical place or the spiritual station makes them cry. They do as Rumi adjures and "[s]hed many tears of blood from eyes and heart,"[211] so their tears sometimes can be considered as the blood of the heart.

This group sometimes joins the cosmos in shedding tears or the cosmos shares their crying. Ismail Haqqi mentions a hadith which indicates that "the earth and heavens weep because of fear of God."[212] Nursi says that "the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) supplicates with such a need, so sorrowfully, in such a loving, yearning, and beseeching fashion that he brings the whole cosmos to tears, leading them to join in his prayer."[213] Rumi reflects the cry of the creation as follows:

> And earth cries, "O keep me fixed and steadfast,
> Thou who hast placed me on the top of waters!"
> The obedience of stone and staff is shown to you,
> And informs you of that of other inanimate things.
> They cry, "We are all aware of God and obey Him."[214]

211 Rumi, *The Masnavi*, trans. E.H. Whinfield, [1898], at sacred-texts.com, book 1 www.sacred-texts.com/isl/masnavi/msn01.htm. Retrieved 20.09.2016.

212 Ismail Haqqi, ibid., altafsir.com. Retrieved 04.07.2016.

213 Nursi, *The Words*, 248.

214 Rumi, *Mathnawi*, Book 4, www.sacred-texts.com/isl/masnavi/msn04.htm. Re-

This can be called "collective crying" for a higher purpose. Each of the groups mentioned above has sub-degrees as well. They comprehend, digest, feel, experience and live knowledge with total satisfaction of the mind, heart, and the soul without any doubt. Gülen also asks his students and followers to cry collectively to soften hearts. He believes the best supplication is the one which is done through actions and supported verbally with tears. Just as the state has soft power, for Gülen, the strength of a believer is supplication with sincere tears.

Great scholars and saints view themselves as the weakest and most powerless of creation like an infant child. As a baby expresses his/her powerlessness by crying, similarly saints also express their powerlessness and weakness though weeping. However, they do not request their needs from a human being but ask the One who has Infinite Mercy. As people attend to the needs of the baby, saints believe that shedding tears is an invitation to God's help. This is a tradition of all Prophets as mentioned in their stories. So, crying is a way of communicating with God for Prophets, saints, scholars and believers. It is also a natural way to heal humans spiritually, physiologically, and psychologically.

It can be argued that by crying, weeping, and suffering for others, Gülen is not inventing something new but reintroducing the way of *Salaf al-Saliheen*, the first three generations of Islam. As can be seen in the testimonials of his friends, the power of crying and suffering for others, has softened hearts, reconciled hearts and minds, motivated people for the common good and become a step in spiritual ascension. His tears have affected millions of people and mobilised them for educational purposes. The success of the Hizmet Movement was able to be achieved not by tens of billions of dollars but through sincere actions with tears, altruism, and devotion.

Conclusion

Shedding tears is a part of human nature. It is not harmful but has many physical and health benefits. A person can produce ten ounces of tears per day and thirty gallons per year.[215] Crying, weeping, and

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trieved 29.09.2016.

215 Lizette Borreli, "Cry It Out: 6 Surprising Health Benefits Of Shedding A Few Tears,"

groaning are attributes of all Prophets, saints and great scholars for spiritual reasons more than physical ones. History does not record any Prophet, saint, or great scholars who did not shed tears. The wonders of creation, love of the Beloved, fear of the Creator, the pain of others, injustice, failure to achieve their goals, not being understood by contemporaries are the major reasons for their sorrow and tearful prayers.

It was at about the age of fifteen that Gülen faced his first experience of overcoming with sorrow the physical and spiritual tragedies in the Muslim world. He has become unable to hold back his tears during his sermons, talks, prayers and hence has become known as the weeping scholar, despite his last name meaning "the one who laughs." Despite all his tears, Gülen questioned the sincerity of his sorrow and crying and asked God for genuine and sincere tears. Based on my research, there is no scholar in the contemporary Muslim world known for crying as much as Gülen. Just as Hasan al-Basri's face was permanently marked from continued crying, so too do Gülen's eyes remain swollen. Each calamity that strikes the Muslim world seems to affect Gülen first. All his friends, students, and associates over the last fifty years confirm this characteristic of Gülen. He cries for the significance of creation, blessings, love of God, at injustice, and tyranny, other wrongdoing, and at calamities in the world. It can be said that tears are like walnut seeds. If they do not have proper soil, enough light, and water, their growth is too slow. Similarly, if their contemporaries do not understand the great mind of a scholar, then his/her ideas influence society slowly, but after the death, the value of tears is understood. As Rumi's father Bahauddin Walad says, their sultanates begin when their eyes are closed forever. It seems that Gülen is sharing the destiny of all the great scholars with tearful eyes in the history of Islam.

May 19, 2015 *medical daily*, www.medicaldaily.com/cry-it-out-6-surprising-health-benefits-shedding-few-tears-333952.

Chapter 4

Gülen and *Sayyidhood* Leadership